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SERIES ONE

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SERIES ON

THE BRIGATE ROSSE:
POLITICS OF PROTRACTED WAR IN THE IMPERIALIST METROPOLIS

BASIC FACTS ABOUT THE BR

The Red Brigades are not an armed collective, but the main Marxist-Leninist organization in Italy. They swim in the sea of proletarian unrest and share with other revolutionaries a base of support that is in the many thousands. Their leading position is valid not only on the scales of organization and influence, but also in the central reality that their strategic leadership has been proven in practice. They view their struggle as comprising the first stage of a protracted war, in which the central focus is the building of an armed communist party.

The BR has won signal victories, suffered important losses, and built and fought courageously for over fourteen years. During seasons of mass offensives against Italian capitalism as well as seasons of counter-blows and retreats. All around them during these years virtually all other revolutionary groupings have fallen to state repression, fragmented hopelessly from inner political confusions, or given up and driferd person-by-person back out of struggle or to reformism. The BR almost alone has endured and carried the struggle forward. This is a reality that its revisionist critics on this side of the Atlantic cannot face.

The misimpression is often given that the Red Brigades are a bourgeois student grouping similar to the U.S. Weather Underground. While the BR was born in the 1960's university and youth ferment in northern Italy, they bear no similarity to the Weather Underground. Not in class composition, not in strength and not in political line. The Brigades have an organic relationship to the Italian proletariat. Even from the beginning many of their members were from the working classes. More to the point, the BR is an integral stage in the long tradition of proletarian struggle in Italy.

An example is Alberto Franceschini, (now imprisoned), who is one of the leading BR cadre and who represents the third generation of his family to pick up the gun. Franceschini's grandmother was an organizer of a militant peasant league in 1922. His grandfather was arrested and spent many years of his life in fascist prisons, before finally breaking out and joining the armed underground as a fighter (at age 59). Carlos Franceschini, Alberto's father, was sent by the Nazis to Auschwitz concentration camp for being a communist. He too escaped, made his way back to their home region, and became an intelligence cadre in the Partisan Action Squads. After World War II he went to work for the Communist Party of Italy (CPI). Now retired, he says: "I have lived as a proletarian and I want to die as a proletarian. I have done my work, I have given what I could give. Above all, I have given my son." This is the Red tradition that the Brigades represent.

Of the seven BR cadre known to the police as of September 1976 who came from the Southern city of Reggio Emilia (Franceschini's home town), four are from proletarian families, two from the petty bourgeoisie, and one from the peasantry. While three of them became university students, the other four were a plumber, a winery worker, a factory worker, and a salesman for a rubber cement distributor. One, Tonio Parou, was the most respected union shop steward in his plant. So even though the BR was born of the young revolutionary intelligentsia, they came from all classes and many were workers.

All serious evaluations of the Brigades deal with the BR's wide network of support as well. While the BR does not reveal details of its organizational strength (and we ourselves have, of course, no way to directly measure these matters), it might be useful to review the commonly used public estimations on this. In the wake of the BR's Aldo Moro kidnapping (he was the Italian President-to-be and the single most powerful bourgeois politician) in 1978 the New York Times reported:

"The hard core of the Red Brigades consists of 400 to 500 full-time members who are on the payroll of the organization. Their salary is 250,000 lire (about $400) a month, the minimum wage of an Italian worker...

"Above ground, a second group of up to 1,000 Brigatisti live a seemingly normal existence as respected members of Italian society. Specialists in the government, press and diplomatic community who have attempted to piece together a picture of how the terrorists operate generally believe that the above-ground members of the Red Brigades are men and women in their 30's and early 40's whose ties to the organization date back to the student revolution of the late 1960's and early 70's, and who have since made their mark in life and have reached positions of responsibility in government ministries, the police, the large nationalized and private industries and the political parties...

"Among the new recruits, specialists say, have been a good many workers in the large industries in the Milan and Turin area--Italy's most prosperous and most advanced region. This is thought to be highly important--and ominous."

Public estimates of the revolutionary left's active base were uniformly large by the late '70's. Professor Sabino Acquaviva of Padua (one of the militant student centers), a researcher on political violence, put the size of the illegal left underground at 4,000-8,000 cadre and the size of the active support base at 200,000-300,000. In a major New York Times Magazine story in 1981, the conservative U.S. journalist Claire Sterling (who has obvious ties to the C.I.A.) writes of Italy's "so-called Second Society of hundreds of thousands of law-abiding citizens offering the terrorists acceptance and protection."

The question is not whether these estinates are numerically accurate. This is not primary for us. Rather they show how all observers have been impressed with the dimension of the BR's organizational base. Even if, in the current season, repression has disrupted and partially imposed a stillness, this doesn't change the important fact that masses of people voluntarily made a choice for communism.

It is an open secret that the BR has an underground among the older "Stalinist" trade-unionists of the revisionist PCI ("Communist Party of

Italy". These tough veterans of the docks and steel mills, particularly in industrial Turin and Genoa, oppose the revisionist sell-out of their party's revolutionary tradition. Many bitterly condemn the 1945 disarming of their partisan guerrilla units by the PCI leadership as the derailing of revolution. In Genoa a 49-year-old worker at Italsider steel works was caught secretly passing out BR leaflets by a revisionist PCI union officer, who not only informed to the police but testified against his co-worker in court. This collaborator, Guido Rossa, was later executed by the BR.

POLITICAL BACKGROUND

In order to understand the development of communist armed struggle in the 1969-1971 period, it is necessary to grasp the importance of fascism in Italian politics. The massive university outbreaks of 1968 and the militant strikes of young factory workers in the "hot autumn" of 1969 revealed how deepening social crisis had forced millions into conflict with capitalism. The imperialist response was an unleashing of fascist violence in coordination with the State. Just as in 1922, when the bourgeois government asked Benito Mussolini and his Black Shirt fascist legions to take over state power in order to put down the proletarian left, the rotting fascist corpse was reanimated to do the dirty tasks bourgeois democracy could not handle.

The Italian fascist movement began its "strategy of tension," a campaign of violence to both directly attack the left and to create a wave of mass alarm and chaos to justify a military coup. In this first campaign the fascists tried to work secretly, publicly blaming the left for these random, violent attacks. In April 1969 bombings began, clumsily at first, with many misfires. The fascist trademark was (and still is) bombs aimed at crowded public areas--train stations, exhibition halls, etc. On August 8, 1969 the fascists bombed eight trains, but without any fatalities. On October 4, 1969 the fascists tried to bomb an elementary school in Trieste.

On December 12, 1969 the "strategy of tension" reached its deadly heights. The fascist Ordine Nuovo (New Order) bombed the Piazza Fontana in Milan, killing 16 and wounding 90. In July 1970 Ordine Nuovo bombed the Rome-Messina train, killing 6 and wounding 100. All during this period the fascists called for "civil war" against the left and the installation of a "strong" government. Their direct attacks against the movement grew. Aided by police, fascist squadristi attacked known leftists in the streets in Milan. Newsvendors who sold communist newspapers were beaten up. In May 1974 eight activists were killed in Brescia when an anti-fascist march was hand-grenaded by Ordine Nuovo.

The state, acting in lockstep coordination with the fascist counter-attack, itself moved against the revolutionary left with gathering weight. On the day of the nationwide general strike of November 19, 1969, police jeeps charged movement crowds leaving a theater in Milan. Driving up on the sidewalks, the police tried to cause a dangerous panic in the crowd of departing youths. In the melee two jeeps collided with each other, killing one of the police. Immediately the police and bourgeois press shouted that this cop was "murdered" by communists. His funeral became a fascist rally, and Italian President Saragat (one of the historic old leaders of Italian Social-Democracy) called upon the public to "isolate and inoculate" the movement.

In December 1969 the Milan police announced that leftists had done the

random bombing at Piazza Fontana and arrested two anarchists, Valpreda and Pinelli.* Valpreda was held for three years before the charges were finally dropped, while Pinelli was thrown to his death out of the office window of the chief of the "Red Squad" at Milan police headquarters. Officially his "suicide" was "proof" of his alleged guilt.

In this time the generalized repression of the left gathered significant weight. The editors of two leading anti-revisionist newspapers were arrested. Italy's most celebrated New Leftist, Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, was indicted for publishing an Italian edition of Tricontinental magazine. The old Mussolini-era laws making it a crime "to incite class hatred" were revived. Between October 1969 and January 1970--the height of the fascist "strategy of tension"--some thirteen thousand legal indictments were issued against members of the movement. At this time the student struggles were receding from their 1968 crest.

The use of force to finally strike down dissent extended to the proletarian masses, as did the generalized use of militant force by the exploited to push back with their demands. The signal event was the crushing of a farm labor demonstration near Avola on December 2, 1968. The police ended the protest by gunfire, continuing firing at those hiding in the fields for 25 minutes. Two were killed and many wounded, including children. The public scandal was enormous, but neither the State nor the parliamentary political parties were moved. The strategy of the bourgeoisie, gradually unfolding step by step, was to kill the rebellion in society by repressive force--if necessary to the most naked and fascistic degree.

Then, too, a section of the bourgeoisie and its security apparatus believed that only a fascist state, reached via a military coup, would be "strong" enough to rise above Italy's permanent parliamentary paralysis and restore order to the society. In 1964 General DeLorenzo, head of SID (Italian military counterespionage police), was exposed while trying to organize a fascist seizure of the government. Forced into retirement, Gen. DeLorenzo won a seat in Parliament as a leader of the neo-fascist La Destra Nazionale party. (At that point some 7% of the Parliament seats were held by the fascist parties.) His successor as SID chief, General Miceli, was himself later implicated in the abortive 1970 armed coup attempt by fascist leader Prince Valerio Borghese (an aristocratic fascist hero of World War II). The SID, in the collapse of the feeble take-over attempt, used its secret military resources to spirit the key fascist conspirators out of the country.

The Italian press openly speculated on whether a military "strong man" would seize power. So heavy were the possibilities of a fascist coup that three times in 1969-1974 the revisionist PCI put its tens of thousands of cadre on alert, poised to go underground instantly if the fascist take-over went through.

In 1968 and 1969 the young revolutionaries who would become the core of the BR were primarily engaged in theoretical struggle and mass organizing within workplace study collectives. Far from being romantically obsessed with military action, they were sharply critical of "focoism" and other tendencies that they saw as separating in a subjective fashion the timing of communist

* It is now officially admitted to have been done by Ordine Nuovo.

development from the general timing of the proletarian class struggle.

The factory and office collectives were implanting themselves in the workplace and achieving the useful--but not spectacular--results we might expect. At the giant Pirelli tire plant in Milan the revolutionary left had successfuly joined with other workers in launching a broad campaign around speed-up and safety issues. At the IBM plant in Vimercate they forced the company—and a collusive union--to rehire a rank-and-file leader who had been dismissed. At Siemens young revolutionaries led an office-clerical workers strike, the first strike at the company for 20 years, which included 90 percent of the ofice employees. Yet, the progress of the revolutionary left, while more than adequate in terms of any given individual workplace, was outstripped by events and inadequate in terms of the class struggle as a whole.

To be limited to the issue of unsafe factory conditions while the bourgeoisie was moving its major forces into position to militarily shoot society into pacification was objectively inadequate. To be still at the political level of reforming the local union while the rise of national fascism corroded the present situation was objectively inadequate. As the IBM study group wrote in 1970: "The political vacuum in which the struggle in the factory treads marks...an inability to give a proper political weight and an adequate outgrowth. The bombs that exploded in Milan have objectively closed the struggle over collective bargaining contracts." The IBM study group concluded that the young revolutionaly left, still not consolidated into a new, genuinely communist party, still with only slender roots within the proletariat, had the objective choice of either moving to a higher level of development "or they are doomed to be inexorably swept off the political stage..."

It was the duty, however difficult, of the revolutionary vanguard to correctly respond to objective conditions and thus be able to lead the proletariat beyond its present subjective limitations. The higher level was armed struggle, to deny the imperialists an unopposed reign of terror and repression. The Red Brigades had begun secretly building an armed communist underground in 1969. Cadre already active in organizing the BR wrote: "The comrades must understand that political struggle cannot be waged unless the military dimension of the clash is also assumed...The bosses have militarized power, let us militarize the clash."

THE MEASURES TAKEN

The vanguard set forth its political analysis: "The hypothesis therefore is that of a long 'protracted war,' in the course of which the working class strengthens itself in the measure in which it organizes itself...for this is the crux of the matter. It is not so much a matter of a speedy victory and of vanquishing all (the facile slogans of fledgling manipulators) but of growing in a struggle of long duration...Revolutionary process and not revolutionary moment..."

"In Europe...the hypothesis of the generalized insurrection is today absolutely illusory. But this does not signify the renunciation of one's task as a revolutionary...The bourgeoisie has already chosen illegality. The long revolutionary march in the metropolis is the only adequate response. It must begin today and here."

All this is very far from the manipulated image of the Brigades as those intoxicated with machine guns, whose politics supposedly begin and end with violent tactical gestures. The Italian situation is especially instructive to us, because it shows the working out in practice of the competing political lines. For within the movement of young revolutionaries at that critical nexus were not only sharply differing lines, but ones that on the surface appeared to differ only more subtly. In specific there were instructive differences among those who favored armed revolutionary action that proved to be all-important.

Across the Italian struggle of the 1970's no less than 22 armed, clandestine, revolutionary organizations took form (in actuality thousands of military actions were done under some 100 names, although most of these appear to have been ad hoc retaliations by informal groupings of activists). Demonstrations of the young left were conducted under an escalating atmosphere of confrontation. Indeed, under the pressure of fascist violence and state repression, armed security squads became the rule at left rallies and meetings (even by those groupings opposed to armed struggle). Often public movement demonstrations ended with shoot-outs between masked pistol-carrying activists and the police. The social crisis and the spreading use of force extended to all classes. Factory take-overs, take-overs of buses by workers to demand free fares, mass fighting in the streets to protest rent increases, were part of this phenomenon. The actual birth of organized guerrilla struggle, therefore, was not a subjective decision of a few but an inevitable aspect of the overall deepening of imperialist crisis in Italy.

1. Among the first armed organizations was that of the Partisan Action Group (GAP), whose early contribution was considerable.* The GAP's most significant figure was Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, the heir to one of Italy's major publishing fortunes. Feltrinelli was greatly moved by the freshness and heroic directness of the Cuban Revolution and his own meeting with Fidel Castro; out of the presses of his publishing house came an amazing Niagara Falls of revolutionary writings from around the world. This was an invaluable service to the young revolutionary movement. Convinced of the impending reality of a fascist coup, Feltrinelli and his comrades began an underground effort in the Spring of 1969. Attacks on corporate offices, expropriations, bombing of U.S. consular offices, even innovative mass propaganda through the broadcasts of a mobile "Radio GAP," gave evidence of the determination of the new fighters.

While to outward eyes the military actions of the Red Brigades may have seemed cut from the same pattern as those of the GAP, the political perspectives were different in significant ways. In the U.S. Empire armed struggle too often is taken as simply shooting away, doing expropriations, etc., over and over until the masses join you--the "real" questions seem to be ones of small-group security and military tactics, while politics seems little more than inspirational slogans. The Italian experience shows how armed struggle, more than any other form of struggle, is completely dependent upon the scientific correctness of political line.

The GAP aimed themselves directly at the formation of an army, which they believed was the main instrument of the class struggle. In contrast, the Red Brigades aimed at building <u>not</u> an army, but "the armed party of the

* See the Red Brigades document following this paper.

proletariat." It is the vanguard party that is critical to the BR, for without it there is no strategic leadership. Since the GAP left the question of the Party to others (seeking only to be the military fist of the struggle), it proved unable to confront revisionism or to stabilize political unity within its own ranks. Their initiative and self-sacrifice to start an army could not overcome their reluctance to break cleanly with the past. Indeed, the GAP not only still looked to the USSR, but still hoped that the revisionist PCI (which was the historic party of Italian workers) could be reformed and purified.

It is not unusual, therefore, that the GAP as an organization had full vitality for only three years. The same was true of the later Armed Proletarian Nuclei (NAP), which formed in Naples in 1973-74. The NAP's history is related to that of the prison struggle, and more than any other grouping its perspective was based on the "lumpen." As one NAP fighter said in court:

"We address ourselves to that reservoir of the unemployed, convicts, subproletarians... An historic alliance between these persons and the proletariat is necessary. That is why the NAP are within the masses..."

ANNAMARIA MANTINI CLAIMS HER BROTHER'S BODY

"On October 31, 1974 Annamaria went to the Florence morgue to identify her brother's body. She was calm, composed. 'Yes, it's Luca all right,' she said simply. In the death chamber she bent over and placed some pages of a book between her brother's hands. The book was Blood In My Eye by George Jackson... She was heard murmuring: 'You were consistent to the very end, Luca. Forward to victory, we will avenge you!' 'We must be ready to consider death as a common thing,' was written in one of the two pages that Annamaria had placed between Luca's hands."

Annamaria Mantini was a NAP partisan, as her brother had been. He died in an expropriation. Annamaria was killed on July 8, 1975 by Sgt. Tuzzolino of the Rome "anti-terrorist" squad. He "accidentally" shot her with his service automatic at point-blank range through the head as he was arresting her. Up to that day the NAP had not killed. Seven months later a NAP unit shot down Sgt. Tuzzolino, leaving him permanently paralyzed.

Again, the NAP contributed (at a heavy price) to the early development of the armed movement. They helped politicize the spontaneous struggle in the prisons, and their actions added to the new current. In May 1975, for example, the NAP's October 29th Nucleus kidnapped Rome Judge Giuseppe DiGennaro, holding him until the authorities agreed to the transfer of three NAP cadre to other prisons, and to a nation-wide radio broadcast of a communique on the prison struggle.

The NAP was defeated, its cells broken up and arrested beneath the counter-attack of the State. Such defeat was neither final, accidental, nor inevitable. Like the Partisan Action Group, the NAP failed to fully reach a scientific, proletarian class outlook. They did not, for example, grasp the essence of protracted war. Protracted war doesn't just mean "long"; it also means "soon", "timely", "build for the years to come"--in other words, a war in which the Revolution dominates and utilizes the dimension of time.

To repeat, the BR insisted on "revolutionary process and not revolutionary moment." So that while the Brigades had begun organizing by the Fall of 1969, it was not until September 1971 that the first BR actions signed by communiques appeared. Those actions related to factory struggles, and were limited to destroying the cars of executives. There appear to have been only a few of those symbolic propaganda actions. In 1972 and 1973 there were three kidnappings of executives.

It was not until April 1974--some four and one half years after the discussions forming the BR began--that the first important military action took place. That was the kidnapping of Sossi, the chief prosecutor of Genoa. He was released in return for the promised release of two BR cadre--a release later blocked by Prosecutor Francesco Coco in a "betrayal." It was Coco who, after warnings, was the first person assassinated (along with his two body-guards) by the BR in June 1976. So almost seven years elapsed between the political discussions forming the Brigades and their first firefight.

The Brigades spent years primarily in strategic preparation; building a militant base within the proletariat, training cadre and organizing a political structure to sustain combatants, to educate the class, and to counter the blows of the State. Their noted efficiency (along with their "nine lives") are not products of sheer technique, but of correct political line. Not of tactical ability alone, but of both strategy and tactics.

The NAP, for all their heroism, entered the arena of combat relatively late, at the end of 1973. By "late," we mean at a time when armed struggle had already commenced, the State already "on guard," and many cadres already committed elsewhere. Their hurried building focussed on tactically assembling fighters, with the depth of infra-structure that characterizes the BR visibly lacking. Many NAP cadre had to function on both levels simultaneously, being the public militant organizers and also the secret armed combatants. In Florence, for example, one NAP cadre was at the same time the public leader of the militantly pro-armed struggle Jackson Collective and also the leader of the NAP armed expropriation cell. His death in a failed expropriation resulted in both the local aboveground and the underground being disorganized. The lack of security was obvious. Courage and zeal are indispensable, but they are not enough alone. In both the GAP and the NAP there was a relationship between their class perspectives and their inability, despite much that was so commendable, to find the right strategic grasp on picking up the gun.

2. Developing shoulder-to-shoulder with the current of armed struggle was the Autonomy movement ("Autonomia"), which represented the mass struggles of the young revolutionary left. While the "Autonomous Area" had outward aspects of the 1960's "counter-culture," it was highly political. Autonomia was explicitly anti-reformist, standing for self-liberation from the hegemony of bourgeois institutions, politics, values--a fighting "counter-culture," in which coffeeshops and Marxist journals blended with independent factory committees and neighborhood struggles over tenants' rights. Even the New York Times had to notice how, by 1978, Autonomia factory committees had put the bourgeois unions on the defensive: "...outflanked and savagely fought by small ultramilitant groups of workers who beat up foremen, wreck machine tools and start fires." Autonomia tried to raise a magnetic pole of rebellious attraction in the proletariat that rejected the bourgeois institutionalization of union structures and reform politics.

There is no doubt of this movement's historic contributions, its liberating awakening from the slumber of revisionism. It is also true that this current—which was in the main a revolutionary one—was not able to fully overcome a habituation with spontaneity and individualistic militancy. It tended to think as though the strategic foundations of revolution could come from more militant tactics within mass movements.

Autonomia, in particular the leading organization Autonomia Operaia (Workers Autonomy)—or AO—generally scorned the building of a vanguard party as too elitist and outmoded. Instead, they saw a new type of revolution arising from the spontaneous advances of the masses, who would violently fight themselves free from the cage of institutionalized and ritualized reforms.

AO criticized the BR as not only elitist, but as a tendency whose move towards tight, conspiratorial organization had caused them to lose close, flexible involvement with the mass struggles. Autonomia unfavorably compared the small, carefully prepared actions of the BR to the large-scale, spontaneous illegality of mass movements. Autonomia was in no way passive, but a current in which the highest value was put on individuals becoming autonomous from bourgeois constraints, on militancy in all areas of social confrontation. Everything from forcibly taking groceries past the cash register without paying to ripping out bus fare boxes in the fight for free fares. On the other side of this militancy, when natural disasters devastated rural areas Autonomia would demonstrate the institutionalized fraud of official relief by sending in soup kitchens that instantly functioned.

The Autonomia "movement on social needs" promoted mass struggle to directly take what people needed to live. Their "self-reduction" campaign had workers simplyu reduce their payments on utility bills, rent, transit fares, etc. to a level that each person felt was fair. In the factories militants were urged to unilaterally improve working conditions by individual absenteeism and sabotage of production. Particularly during the intensity of the 1977 university revolts, with violent student take-overs of campuses, AO's approach seemd to some to herald a new road to revolution.

The Brigades, while supporting the growth in militant struggles by students and young workers, had severe criticisms of Autonomia's spontaneistic approach. It was clear even back in the 1960's that much of the young left believed that strategy consisted only of joining whatever popular struggles the masses swelled in order to push the most confrontational tactics. The cadre that were founding the BR specifically pointed out their disagreement with the "elementary" line that made no strategic moves, bnut instead only proposed:

"...to pursue the eruptions of struggle wherever they manifest themselves (universities, Battipagua, Fiat, Pirelli, technicians, bank employees) with a single aim: to produce a 'radicalization' of the struggle through the exaltation of the forms in which it manifests itself; the contents of the struggles are left to take a back seat."

It had become apparent that the political line of Autonomia contained much value, much inventiveness, but also unresolved contradictions. The stress on a program of spontaneous, individualistic struggle was, however popular at times, unable to work in a strategic manner. For example, the "weapon" of heavy absenteeism in the factories just led to the Autonomia militants getting

themselves fired. Even worse, the brazen stance of promoting the use of force without adopting an underground cadre structure or other preparations for severe repression ended in tragedy. Autonomia was, whatever it said, counting heavily on using bourgeois civil liberties. This is, of course, a complete contradiction--revolutionary "autonomy" that is tied to the scant protection of bourgeois laws. The BR noted:

"The resistance movement and the area of Autonomia is built and articulated around guerrilla warfare, and not vice versa. To enlarge this area signifies, therefore, in the first place to develop the organization of guerrilla warfare... The 'autonomous assemblies' do not know how to get out of the false opposition of 'legality' and 'illegality.' They fail to pose the question of organization based on real political needs, and thus they end up by delimiting the latter within the type of legal organization they have given themselves. They cut their feet to make them fit the shoe..."

Autonomia has been crushed by State repression. Its journals have been banned, its demonstrations no longer permitted. Many of its leading members and many activists have been arrested as "terrorists," with the State charging that AO theoretical leaders were the secret generals of the Red Brigades(!). Padua University professors Tony Negri, Ornato Scalzone and other prominent Autonomia intellectuals were singled out for repression. The reaction has in some cases been a furious back-pedalling, with criticisms of the BR for "prematurely" antagonizing the imperialists and supposedly touching off a repression too heavy to handle. AO leader Franco Piperno, before his arrest in Paris, proposed from hiding that an "amnesty" be agreed on, with revolutionary fighters giving up and returning to "legal" life while the imperialists freed prisoners and ended repression. To this hopelessly idiotic proposal the BR replied: "We are only at the start of the war and you already beg for a truce."

3. The third road taken by young activists of the New Left was to double back toward the PCI. Sixties leaders such as Alberto Asor Rosa and Mario Tronti eventually decided that no revolutionary progress was possible without reforming the giant PCI and getting it moving again.

This is hard to appreciate without knowing that the PCI is one of the three main institutions of Italian society; more than just the "historic party of the Italian proletariat," the PCI ("Communist Party of Italy") is in U.S. terms like the White Left, Democratic Party, YMCA and AFL-CIO rolled into one organization. The PCI usually gets roughly 30% of the national vote, and through its elected officials it runs half of the municipal governments in Italy. The PCI trade union arm, the General Confederation of Labor, is by far the dominant union grouping, and has 4 milion members (in Italy union membership is voluntary, and in each major factory workers belong to different unions of the competing major political parties).

Since the Sixties the PCI, once merely a pro-Moscow, election-oriented, revisionist bureaucracy, has "ripened" even further. Under the direction of its Secretary-General, Enrico Berlinguer, the PCI has become the foremost world example of so-called "Euro-communism." The PCI has denounced "Stalinism" and Moscow, pledged itself to working only through bourgeois government, and tried to appear with a freshly painted coat of "humanism" and "democracy" over it. That is to say, the PCI has taken the logical step for revisionism and abandoned the historical baggage of its long-ago Leninist past. Where once

the PCI fought fascism with rifles in hand, now it is collaborating with fascism.

Marxism-Leninism has long scientifically understood the relationship of revisionism to fascism; nowhere has the tie reached so high a stage of unity as in Italy.* In the 1970's Italy edged up to the brink of a fascist coup. The rising tide of mass unrest and struggle, the feeble anachronism of the Italian state machinery, and the paralysis of Italian parliamentary politics (for years deadlocked between the conservative Christian Democrats and the revisionist PCI) all seemed to press toward the brink of ending bourgeois democracy. This did not happen in the expected way.

The Red Brigades and other revolutionary organizations that predicted fascism have been criticized as alarmist, criticized as those who arm to fight imaginary dangers while ignoring the undramatic, humble work of mass organizing. We can safely say that the BR's analysis (and that of the GAP and other groups) was not completely accurate but was close to its target.

The Italian phenomenon is a type of nascent neo-fascism, with the revisionist PCI carrying out some of the functions usually done by a Nazi party under full-blown fascism of the old style. In 1978, after years of manouvering, the PCI and the Christian Democrats entered into the "historic compromise," Ending 30 years of Left parliamentary opposition, the PCI promised to support the reactionary government if they were consulted about major policy decisions.

This "grand embrace" was far more than just a phase of parliamentary maneuvering. The PCI's final step into the right answers an emergency that only fascism has usually been able to handle. Capitalism's governmental paralysis has been at least temporarily eased, since with the PCI's support when necessary the political representatives of the bourgeoisie enjoy the votes of right, center and Left in the parliament. Thus there is the panoply of bourgeois democracy—elections, changes of cabinet, continual bickering and debate—but only one possible government and only one program.

The PCI has even jumped over the parliamentary right, and has joined the outright fascists in vying for the mantle of being the "law and order" party. In parliament the party has threatened to bring down any conservative government that negotiates with the BR. The PCI has zealously called for and voted for each new repressive law asked for by the security agencies. These include giving the police greater powers to tap telephones, to arrest suspected revolutionaries before any investigation, to imprison those designated as "terrorists" up to 12 years without trial (and many are so held), and on and on. It goes without saying that the PCI warmly approves of Government banning of left publications and demonstrations. The leadership of the PCI does not merely support, but rather demands, a police state reign of terror against the proletariat.

Berlinguer and his clique atop the PCI saw the deepening social crisis as a moment of problems, but also of supreme opportunity. The rise of genuine

* Benito Mussolini, the Italian fascist dictator from 1922-1945, originally came out of the leadership of the revisionist Italian Socialist Party. He was, in fact, the editor of their national newspaper.

revolutionary forces, particularly in the working class, threatened to undermine the base of the PCI's power. Already in the universities the PCI had lost ground it would never regain. So the revisionists no less than the police officials desperately wanted to kill off this vital young left.

And on the other hand, the inability of the old bourgeois machinery to stop the revolutionary forces created an opening for Berlinguer and his fellow revisionist bureaucrats to join the capitalist front office. The week after the March 1978 kidnapping of Aldo Moro, the New York Times reported:

"In the view of many Italians, including anti-communists, it has become more true than ever that the country cannot be governed without the Communists (the PCI--ed.). And the Communists have made the most of this feeling. In speeches and newspaper articles their leaders have been arguing that only a mobilization of all the political and social forces of the country can stave off the terrorist threat..."

This could be the words of a Hitler or a Mussolini. The PCI spoke of "mobilizing" the whole Italian nation into one mailed fist to smash the revolutionaries. These neo-fascists (or should we say, "National Socialists"?) tell the workers that the No. 1 priority is assisting the security police to arrest guerrillas. The Nazi movement in Germany gave the bourgeoisie a mass apparatus, a network located within every school, factory, office and street to act as the fanatical eyes, ears and fists of the State.

The imperialist use of mass revisionism in a neo-fascist way does not achieve everything that a Nazi-type party would do. It does not promote ideological fascism, etc. But the great advantage to the imperialists is that this nascent neo-fascism mobilizes the masses and places them at the service of the State apparatus, permits one-party rule, suppresses the sectors of rebellion, disciplines the proletariat--and the flexibility and coopt ive framework of bourgeois democracy are still retained to a large degree. Further, all these crimes are done in the name of "democracy" by a party that calls itself "Communist." How better?

The massive network of PCI unions, student organizations, neighborhood sections, etc. has been turned into both an informer's network for the police and an anti-left thug army. After BR actions the PCI union officers are supposed to check if any workers in their departments missed work those days, and thus could be suspects. In some cities PCI members have been given lists of suspicious signs to watch out for in their neighbors--such as keeping irregular hours--that might indicate underground revolutionaries. AO leader Piperno was arrested in Paris because a vacationing PCI member spotted him at a cafe and called in French police. Factory rallies and strikes by the revolutionary left no longer take place, in part because the PCI has physically crushed such attempts with goon squads of hundreds of PCI security men swinging crow bars and pipes. The police and bosses assist quite happily, of course. Why would the imperialists need a fascist coup, with this type of neo-fascism (which calls itself "Communist") to give them a mass base?

The new kind of relationships can be seen in the way that the imperialists, acting through the State, have harmoniously put together into harness both the fascists and the revisionists. Thus Pietro Calogero, the Padua prosecutor who led the mass arrests of the Autonomia theoreticians, is a

PCI members. On the other hand, Achille Gallucci, who was in charge of the Moro investigation before he got promoted to be chief prosecutor for Rome, was a known associate of the armed fascist leadership. Gallucci as chief prosecutor banned the Autonomia publications and stepped up the repression. So today revisionists and fascists work side-by-side in the Italian repressive apparatus, uniting under the hegemony of imperialism to exterminate the new revolutionary upsurge from below.

While the PCI's recruitment to the State security apparatus sharply increased the repression (and the losses), the Berlinguer clique has not been able to make its party base collaborate as well as they had hoped. The revisionist leadership did make many new friendships; they were, however, all among anti-communists. Party membership has fallen. Even beyond this, many members have just gone inactive. The PCI youth organization, the Young Communist Federation, lost 60,000 members in the four years after Berlinguer's "historic compromise." That was half of their total membership.

Revisionism in Italy has made its nature clear, and this marks a historic turning point. The PCI will increasingly lose its ability to "absorb" and muffle new layers of militancy that arise. We could learn from this advanced example that revisionism is not just "confused," not just "not revolutionary enough"; it represents the interests of the petty bourgeoisie within the proletarian movement. The Italian situation makes this traditional analysis come to life.

INTERNAL STRUGGLE

The present situation is one of extreme difficulty for our Italian comrades. The imperialist counter-blows have been harsh, the repression of the public left created a partial stillness over the surface of Italian politics. While the repressive machinery has struck many blows, it is necessary to point out that its characteristic clumsiness is still true.

As a classic example, after Moro was kidnapped, the carabinieri (the national para-military police) released the photographs of 20 "terrorists" said to be responsible--it turned out that one was a police agent, two were in prison, one was someone who had left Italy three years before, and two were photos of the same man with and without a mustache. This is still typical of police abilities.

It is, however, an unescapable reality that the past three years have seen serious reverses suffered by the BR. Many have come from internal weaknesses, from cadre "turning." In 1980, Patrizio Peci, one of the leading BR cadre, "turned" and furnished police with deadly information about underground members, safe houses, and organization. Many were arrested as a result, and the BR publicly said that Peci's defection "wounded us near the heart."

In January 1982, the carabinieri freed U.S. General James Dozier, who had been a BR captive in Padua for over a month. Antonio Savasta, the group leader of the action, not only failed to execute Dozier when the police broke into the apartment, but soon "turned" police informer. This demoralizing event was a great surprise, even after the Peci defection. It was untypical of the steadfastness of the BR. Questions have been raised about whether the BR are collapsing, demoralized under the pressure of heavy repression.

On a military plane the BR have, throughout this heavier and heavier repression, continued to operate. In January 1981 the Brigades captured Judge Giovanni D'Urso, the head of Italy's maximum security prisons. At the same time imprisoned cadre led an uprising at the Trani maximum security prison, briefly holding 18 guards. D'Urso was released in return for the government closing Asinara, (where Curcio and other BR cadre had been), the security prison that was the most remote and with the worst conditions. Carabinieri General Enrico Galvaligi, chief of security for the political prisons, was assassinated by the BR on New Years Day.

That summer the BR interrogated, tried and executed Roberto Peci, who had been used by police to get his brother to "turn." In the South, in the city of Naples, a leading reactionary politician, Ciro Cirillo, was captured and held 90 days before the imperialists paid a large ransom. In Milan an auto executive was held until his company (Alfa Romeo) agreed to recall laid-off workers. In Mestre an executive responsible for repressing workers at a chemical plant was captured and executed. These were just a few of the many actions of the "Summer offensive." The New York Times reported:

"The kidnappings demonstrated the terrorists' continued ability to infiltrate Italian institutions. In Naples, the Cirillo affair led officials to conclude that the terrorists had moles in the region's administration, of which Mr. Cirillo was a member. In the Milan and Mestre kidnappings, the terrorists' declarations showed that they had infiltrated a major labor union, as a union official conceded in one of the first admissions of its kind."

As this is being written the radio news tells us that the Brigades have assassinated two prison wardens in two successive days. How do we reconcile this military capacity, this strength of hidden support, with the instability that has touched even leading cadres? It is well-known that the Brigades have been undergoing a protracted inner struggle over political perspective. The dominant tendency has been to try and match the imperialists blow-for-blow, to step up the level of guerrilla actions as repression intensifies. This is certainly understandable; it needs little explanation.

The opposing point of view has been held by many leading BR cadre, particularly those in prison. In their 1980 document a discussion on subjectivism and militarism, Renato Curcio, Alberto Franceschini, and other cadre sharply criticize "military subjectivism" which has led to a one-sided concentration on tactical technique at the expense of strategic revolutionary politics. Thus, in their view, guerrilla P.O.W.s "turn" because the organization now produces fighters who are not and in some cases are unfit to be politically armed. Straining to overcome the repression on a purely military plane, the organization in the field has increasingly been concentrating everything on tactical military operations. Tactics over strategy.

This "militarist subjectivism," in the Curcio-Franceschini view, is "a noose around the neck of the proletarian revolution." They point out that it is: "a course which must be criticized because it revives in the ranks of the urban proletariat one of the original vices of the capitalist mode of production: the separation between thought and action." This is why, according to this view, the BR has developed some cadre whose military-technical abilities appear impressive, but whose political stability and class stand are

weak (which leads to military disasters).

This is the original debate from 1969-72, between the "Red Army" position of the GAP and the "armed party" position of the BR, now reproduced at a higher level. The BR position now restated in that document does not retreat an inch from armed struggle, but still insists that it must be cast in protracted war based in the masses. Therefore, in their view, in this period of heavy repression and imperialist counter-offensive the first task is to sink deeper underground roots within the proletariat, increasing agitation, and giving industrial workers clear political leadership for mass struggles.

This view holds an unchanged analysis of the long-term nature of the imperialist crisis, in which: "Class tensions coagulate with the prospects of civil war and the authoritarian transformation of the State reaches and goes beyond the point of no return."

Thus, they point out that: "Without a program that explains the social goals of the war it is not possible to mobilize all the proletarian components whose objective interests are at stake and without this mobilization the development of the war is impossible. Militarism cannot defend against this vicious cycle." By concentrating everything on their own immediate military actions and nothing on steadily organizing larger forces for the protracted future, "the organization becomes everything and the proletariat its cheering section, its reservoir of cadres."

* *

This revolutionary struggle in Italy, which has gone through such a rapid and complex development, is enduring a period of great hardship. Not only in terms of the inevitable errors and losses, but in the temporary ebb of mass struggle. The corporations are breaking up their great factory complexes, and laying off tens of thousands as they shift production to new systems of smaller, widely scattered factories that are highly robotized or automated. The proletariat has been hit very hard, and is being forcibly taken apart and reshaped. This is just the most evident "pacification," a step in the imperialist stage our Italian comrades refer to as "restructuration."

In this brief introduction to the Italian revolutionary struggle we have been forced to give only the most general outline. Entire areas of importance, such as the distinctive analysis the Italian revolutionary left has reached on the present stage of world imperialism were not dealt with because we felt it not possible to adequately discuss them in our restricted space.

We do not believe that the program of the Red Brigades is a prescription to be swallowed whole by movements within the U.S. Empire. Just as they struggled to critically examine and learn from the experiences of other communists' movements—but never to imitate anyone--so we, too, should use in a communist way the knowledge our Italian comrades have paid so dearly for. Despite storms of repression, the guerrilla struggle in Italy will endure and advance to final victory!

"OUR DEMAND FOR COMMUNISM IS INDESTRUCTIBLE"

COMMUNIQUE NO. 4:
ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE GAP-FELTRINELLI, 3-31-1979

If it is possible to speak of a beginning in the political history of the Partisan Action Group (GAP), it would be the appeal that comrade Giangraccmo Feltrinelli made to the entire class movement in the Spring of 1969.

In many circles there was an attempt to distort and depreciate the contents of this appeal and therefore it was never carefully examined. But how effectively it applied to the objective conditions of those years, can paradoxically be proven by the agitated and feverish search of his severest critics for "Carabinieri-proof" night shelters and secret, back country paths across the Italian frontiers.

It was said that Feltrinelli had hallucinations about a "fascist coup" and that as a result his political line simply amounted to mechanically repeating a worn-out analysis based on the experiences of the Resistance period (during World War II-Ed.).

This was completely false!

The spectre of coups has certainly never stopped disturbing the dreams of the Italian Left in this long and dark postwar period. July 1960, and in 1964, Carabiniere General De Lorenzo, reminds us that long before 1969 relations between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat had been characterized by open conflict and not exactly "democratic" or constitutional solutions. Feltrinelli was a man of his times, a militant among militants who asked themselves in moments of crisis what to do, how to behave so as not to betray one's communist orientation, one's ideals of social equality and freedom.

But this said, the discussion is barely begun, because, already in the Spring of '69, Feltrinelli does not limit himself to alarming his comrades with a general prediction of a coup; out of the complex of tensions that beset the bourgeoisie, he finds the unresolved nodal problem of Italian capitalist development, discovers the potential for a break in this development, and concludes that among the possible developments on the proletarian side that of armed struggle is without doubt the most far-sighted.

In those times Italian capitalism, having for a long time lived on a regimen of low wages and intensive exploitation of the labor force, found itself faced with the double necessity of adapting itself, at least in part, to the other more advanced European economies, and expanding its own internal market.

While for Capital, the wave of struggles around the new labor contracts that loomed on the horizon could be, on the one hand, the occasion for a jump in this direction; on the other hand, they could also turn out to be a jump in the dark.

The strength accumulated by the working class, particularly after 1962, was great and it was a strength no longer controlled by the unions. If this

strength had been translated into a demand for power instead of simple wages, how could it have been contained, given the "obsolete institutions of the State"?

And then also, how would the already shaken political equilibrium of our country have been affected by the first clouds of the monetary and financial storm that began to roll in from the U.S., foreshadowing nothing good for the entire imperialist world? And, finally, given the clear international vetoes against a direct or indirect association of the PCI (the revisionist, pro-Moscow "Communist Party of Italy"-Ed.) in a new parliamentary majority, vetoes imposed by the Atlantic Pact of NATO and reconfirmed by Nixon's visit, what political alliance would have had the strength to impose the deep-going reorganization necessary to maintain the expansionary capitalist cycle?

It is from these questions that Feltrinelli draws his conclusions and poses on the order of the day for the comrades a discussion of the possibility of a preventive "Italian-style coup d'etat" or at least a formidable shift to the right of the political life of the country.

In substance he says:

"In a moment like this when the threatening spectre of an international financial and economic crisis appears, Italian capitalist development is faced with obstacles from both its superstructure as well as working class demands.

"Recourse to a coup d'etat or a radical authoritarian shift to the right would be completely in keeping with the needs of the system and its need to resolve, if only to its temporary advantage, the most acute contradictions of the moment."

Feltrinelli underlines different motives that would induce the "law and order bloc," headed by the Christian Democratic Party, the big Italian entrepreneurs, the military and international forces, to adopt the preventive military-political solutions we referred to. It is worth quoting one of these motives in particular due to its current relevance:

"The functioning of the State apparatus, of the government and the Italian partyocracy...clashes with the exigencies of modern Italian and international capitalist industry. There is talk in many quarters therefore—and the drafters of the 1980 Plan of the Ministry of the Budget make specific mention of this—of the obsolescence of institutions...Today for large industry and international imperialism the existing political system—even leaving aside its poor administration by the Christian Democrats and the basic class limitations of the constitution on which it is founded—is an objective obstacle to to the development of a colonial-type capitalism which is planned for Italy in the next few years."

It is certainly not correct to speak of "colonial" development (this phrase refers to the theory that Italy was being reorganized as a semi-colony of the U.S. and the other big NATO powers-Ed.), since the economic mechanisms already operating in those years were those of a growing internationalization of capital and consequently the growing domination of the multinational corporations. Italian capitalism was, in other words, entering the phase of imperialism of the multinationals.

Having made this necessary qualification, the significance of the thesis expounded by Feltrinelli has become increasingly clear in these last few years. The process of political, economic and military restructuring of the old post-fascist State into an imperialist State is a perfect example. In fact, the strengthening, beginning in the 1960's, of one faction of the imperialist bourgeoisie, comes into contradiction with the nepotistic, parasitic, mafia-like administration of the State and calls forth a reorganization of the State within the framework of multinational capitalism.

As we observed in our February 1978 Strategic Resolution: "In this same period the supranational institutions (IMF, EEC, NATO), with which the imperialist bourgeoisie wants to impose their global strategy, grow in strength and assume a degree of power which allows them to subordinate the 'national states' and make them work for their imperialist ends, thus forcing the national states to reorganize their internal structures. These States in restructuring themselves, prepare themselves to carry out two fundamental roles:

"1. Transmission belt for the strategic global economic interests of dominant imperialism.

"2. Stabilization of the region, that is to say the organization of the preventive counter-revolution to annihilate any foolish revolutionary plans."

And again:

"For this reason in the various national states we see the progressive decline in the power of parliament and the strengthening of the executive branch. In the constitutional bourgeois states in fact, Parliament, institutionally speaking, is the place where, by means of 'struggle' between the parties, a synthesis should take place of the various, specific regional interests of which these parties are the expression; but in this form Parliament is hard for imperialism to 'govern,' and therefore is an inefficient instrument for the realization of its policies.

Instead, the executive (branch of government-Ed.), to the extent to which it is directly controlled and staffed by imperialist personnel, is capable of carrying out this task much more efficiently. We are therefore witness to an inversion of roles: the State is no longer, as it was in the liberal-democratic tradition, the expression of various parties, but now it is the parties which are the expression of the State; and the executive is no longer the political expression of the relations of forces in Parliament, but the 'foreign' instrument of the imperialist bourgeoisie in that national region.

"It is, in other words, the State now which uses the parties; revives them through public financial aid and uses them to mobilize and organize the masses around their policies."

If the feared institutional ruptures have not taken place despite Piazza Fontana (a fascist bombing in Milan in December, 1969 that killed 16 people and wounded 90 others-Ed.) and other State-inspired massacres, this does not invalidate the substance of Feltrinelli's analysis. Obviously, he could not foresee the multiplicity of forms that such a complex political process would take. Feltrinelli was aware, in any case, of the possibility of a non-military evolution of the crisis; so much so that at the end of his document he

warns against the tendency to allow the same counter-revolutionary developments to take place in a masked fashion, using "democratic" cover:

"Finally it's necessary to make one final and very important political observation: the very fact that a coup d'etat is possible or there even exists the effective threat of one, is enough by itself to push the whole course of Italian political life to the right. This is a rightward shift that is already taking place. The fact that a government Minister in power (Colombo) could declare that 'There is no imminent threat of a coup d'etat in Italy' is a matter of such seriousness that it calls for a complete condemnation of the existing system; making necessary concrete measures and initiatives to struggle for the final destruction of the system and the threats with which it is laden. A coup d'etat, a radical and authoritarian turn to the right, must therefore open up a new, more advanced phase of struggle.

"The brutal intervention of the forces of repression, as the last line of defense of capitalist power, will this time definitively wipe out the hope of carrying out the indispensable social and political improvement of the working class solely through the weapon of criticism and democratic persuasion. This will mean the final eclipse not only of Revisionism—already condemned by history—but also of the hypothesis that it is possible to carry out a socialist revolution without the criticism of weapons."

This conclusion of Feltrinelli's crushes, without any possibility of equivocation, the false theory of two Feltrinellis—one supposedly "the democrat and the defender of existing institutions against the threat of fascist coup" and the other (we don't understand how or why or from what moment) supposedly "destructive" and revolutionary. A kind of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, in other words!

It is his words instead that propound for us as early as the Spring of 1969 an offensive, revolutionary, anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist and anti-Revisionist perspective of armed struggle for communism!

This is our starting point for understanding all the successive developments. It is this perspective that launches the practice of armed combat of the comrades of the GAP.

The GAP Brigades are formed in the Spring of 1970, and take their first steps on the terrain of armed propaganda.

Their initiative breaks with 30 years of systematic political, ideological, and military disarming of the working class by Revisionism. The question of the historic possibility and necessity of armed struggle in our country is confronted in practice, thus proving that even in Italy, even in an advanced capitalist country, it is possible to change the correlation of forces between the classes moving toward a solution to the contradiction which opposes the proletariat to the bourgeoisie.

Thus, in one of the first transmissions by Radio GAP, it is stated: "The path of communist revolution, the path of the final liberation of the Italian proletariat and workers from the domination and exploitation of Italian and foreign capital requires a long and hard war. But the partisan brigades, the comrades and the Italian workers have now finally set out on this path. The

partisan vanguards, workers, laborers and revolutionary students will march compact and united on the path of liberation, on the path of communist revolution until final victory. For Communism, forward to the final victory over capitalism and imperialism."

In this appeal to an unspecified proletariat, which still reflects the lack of a deep-going class analysis, the basic theory that is propounded is that of the possibility and necessity of a protracted revolutionary war as the only means of abolishing and going beyond the capitalist mode of production. It is a thesis whose historic validity noone can doubt any longer.

The first acts of armed propaganda contribute in a decisive way toward dissolving the theoretical knot that in those years had immobilized the revolutionary potential of the proletariat.

The new reality represented by the appearance on the scene of class struggle of the first brigades of communist fighters has the effect of stimulating a debate among the most advanced and combative elements of the proletariat. This accelerates the process of separation of the sincerely revolutionary elements from the opportunist ones, and the opportunists' room for maneuver begins to be restricted.

Despite the immediate and angry campaign of psychological warfare unleashed by the revisionists, formations of communist combatants are constituted and consolidate themselves in Genoa, Milan, Trento, and Turin. In Genoa, in fact, the comrades of the III GAP begin to operate, and in Milan the Valentino Canossi Brigade (which takes its name from a construction worker who was a victim of "white homicide"), begins a campaign against "white homicide." Canossi is one of thousands of workers who each year are sacrificed on the altar of Capitalist profit.

In the GAP, comrades from diverse political backgrounds and struggles come together and enrich the political debate with multiple political tensions.

The dominant political line is that which poses "anti-coupism" as the central question. For the comrades who hold this polition, the main enemy to be defeated is the "law and order bloc," which in these years manifested putschist tendencies.

The minority line, more an attitude than a real and proper political line, was advanced by several young comrades who because of their youth and limited experience did not carry the same political and decision-making weight as the other wing. These young comrades, in general, claimed that the principal contradiction was with American imperialism. They proposed "an ever-expanding and intensified participation in the international anti-imperialist war." Even within this grouping the simplistic interpretation of proletarian internationalism—which was very common in those years—was at work. Guerrilla warfare within the metropolitan centers of imperialism (i.e. the major oppressor nations-Ed.) was understood as subordinated to the struggles of the peoples of the Third World. Thus, its essential characteristic was lost: that of being a principal front in the anti-imperialist class war.

This notwithstanding, these comrades turned their offensive struggle

against the most hateful manifestations of capitalist development--such as, for instance, the "white homicides" and against the fascists. The intent was to "develop a profound political tie with the masses. Fight to grow, fight to become popular among the masses, to give the masses a new sense of security and revolutionary perspective."

In Interview with a partisan of the V. Cenossi CAP Brigade, speaking of their political program, they state that it is necessary to conduct: "acts of reprisal against the bosses and actions in support of the struggles and demands of the workers, giving preference to those situations in which the opponent, the boss, is the first to break the law, his own law. For example, injuries from unsafe working conditions, the demands of construction workers for an end to piece-work, of subcontracting work, of 'black' work specifically outlawed by the bosses' own laws (black market employment-Ed.). It's a reform demand, if you want; all the better we say if in relation to this legal demand, in relation to this obvious contradiction of the enemy, we can take revolutionary action and initiative. To mobilize around the demands of the masses, to take advantage of the contradictions of your opponent, this is the certain way to build political ties to the masses."

Comrade Giangracomo Feltrinelli ("Osvaldo") made the greatest contribution to the formation of the CAP, although he was the main proponent of the first of these two political lines. He was also the only one, as later events will prove, who was authentically revolutionary, non-opportunist and capable of critically reexamining and developing his political positions.

Osvaldo was certainly influenced by the survival of the myths of the Resistance (the armed, anti-fascist partisan movement during World War II-Ed.), which some of his closest comrades uncritically revived. This led him to search for a kind of historical continuity between the Resistance and the nascent guerrilla movement; to see the latter as the unfolding, the second phase, after a thirty-year interruption, of the Partisan war of liberation.

We are not concerned here with passing political judgment on what the Resistance meant to the Italian proletariat. We simply are saying that the rise of armed struggle in the '70's was not a revival of older struggles, but the beginning of a new cycle of revolutionary struggles made possible by the specific conditions of capitalist development.

The "continuity" with the Resistance is seen by us only as that continuity that ties together all the struggles of the proletariat in that long historical process of its liberation, not instead as a revival of political questions only relevant to a specific historical situation such as the Resistance.

A second element plays a negative role in comrade Osvaldo's strategic outline: we're speaking of the concept of "the Socialist Camp."

He was aware of the degree of revisionist degeneration, of the restoration of the capitalist mode of production in the form of State Capitalism, that had occurred in the USSR and Eastern Europe. But his critique was always vague, and as a result he was not able to see all the inescapable consequences.

His complex ties to Cuba fed this political "ambiguity;" in fact, while Osvaldo still considered Cuba an example for all the revolutionary forces in the world, that nation had "already chosen" its subordinate place inside the social-imperialist camp.

Osvaldo's illusions are clearly spelled out in an October 1971 document: "He who considers the Cuban revolutionary war to be over evidently does not recognize reality, not even when he sees it. And he understands very little of questions of revolutionary strategy. The revolutionary war, the revolutionary process, is, in fact, a continental revolutionary process. And it will not end until there is a decisive victory over imperialism in Latin America."

Today, as if it were still necessary to prove it, the role assumed by Cuba within the framework of the social-imperialist strategy in Africa has removed every foundation for this illusion.

We believe that tearing Italy free from the imperialist chain requires a search for a different, new and independent role for our country in the international division of labor and the world market.

This means that in the rivalry between the two superpowers there is no room for theoretical ambiguity and tactical games, and in no case can we support the interests of one to fight the other. Therefore our revolutionary course, to remain proletarian, not only in form but also in content, must safeguard its anti-imperialist and anti-social-imperialist character.

There is then a third element that gives a positive character to the complex contribution that Comrade Osvaldo made to the elaboration of a revolutionary strategy for our country. We're speaking of the recovery of that which most clearly emerges from Che's message: revolutionary will, and a militant new conception of proletarian internationalism.

The revival of revolutionary will contributed to the liberation within the metropolitan proletariat of new energies, until then imprisoned by the fatalistic determinism of official marxism. Revisionism, in fact, is nothing but the final heir of the economist-mechanistic vulgarities that had characterized the Second and Third Internationals.

This new militant conception of proletarian internationalism instead led to a deeper analysis of guerrilla warfare in Latin America.

The "Guevaraism" tendencies of Comrade Osvaldo influenced many others to seek direct knowledge of these experiences and was finally translated into a practical attempt to apply the general principles of guerrilla warfare in the European metropolis.

Osvaldo was one of the first to understand the strategic importance of this new form of proletarian war: urban guerrilla warfare in the heart of imperialism. So much so that for him there was no straight line from the mountains of Bolivia to the European and Italian metropoli, as some scoundrels have tried to make us believe. He was able to draw the essential conclusions from the revolutionary experience of Che: he understood, in other words, the complex development that led from the Brazilian experience of Carlos Mari-

ghella to the Tupamaros, with the radical shift of the center of revolutionary initiative from the countryside to the great urban centers. And, in fact, he chose Milan as the terrain to give life to his revolutionary experience; which, among other things, he put in a continental framework. These are his words:

"The European left has the task of finding the tactical solutions that are right for European conditions, as well as for each European country. (In the course of different revolutionary movements, which may arise in the various countries of the old continent, a continental strategy will inevitably take shape. In our protracted war this continental strategy will be a determining factor.)"

The ultimate, though certainly not only, proof of this attitude was his interest in and militant solidarity with the comrades of the Rotee Armee Fraktion, which in West Germany had opened a new front of anti-imperialist class war. His translation and distribution of one of the first political manifestos of the RAF proves this.

Nor did his activity as a militant revolutionary limit itself to this. On many of his trips he put himself at the service of different revolutionary and anti-imperialist organizations in Latin America and Africa. And if in our country information on these struggles reached a wide proletarian audience, it was due in large measure to his many-faceted militant activity. We refer to the Italian edition of the magazine Tricontinental, to the publication of Che's writings and diaries, and the many pamphlets and books that revealed the theories of the principal revolutionary groups of those years.

And finally, to illustrate his concept of proletarian internationalism, we do not wish to be silent about the unconditional political support and logistic rear bases he supplied to the revolutionary cell that executed the hangman Quintanilla, right in his lair in the Bolivian Consulate in Hamburg. Quintanilla was the butcher who cut off Che's hands and gave them to his American C.I.A. bosses.

At this point it is necessary to draw a general picture of his strategic theories as they appeared in his last document of October 1971: Class Struggle or Class War!

At the center of his thinking Osvaldo places an essential theory of revolutionary marxism: only the political-military conquest of the State allows the proletariat to change capitalist relations of production into communist ones.

This conquest necessarily requires the use of revolutionary violence, since the ruling classes never willingly leave the stage of history, even when they have exhausted their ability to rule.

Revolutionary violence therefore is the catalytic agent of social change, and all past human history shows this.

We are not concerned here with recapitulating the events between 1960 and 1970 that convinced Osvaldo of this thesis. Certainly the great student and working class movements on the one hand, and the tremendous massacre that

the State engineered in Piazza Fontana on the other, influenced him.

Closing with the question, "Where are we today in the Autumn of 1971?", he answers: "The workers' offensive has been broken by the massive counter-offensive of the enemy. Not only has capitalism not collapsed and preinsurrectionary conditions not been created (as some people predicted), but the enemy has invested all his power in an offensive which is at the same time political-military (repression), economic (crisis) and cultural."

From the basically negative and pessimistic balance sheet of the proletarian struggles of 1968-1971 (after three years of struggles and sacrifices we are not much further ahead of where we were in 1968), Osvaldo draws the conclusion that a "leap" is inevitable.

"The mass movement of these last few years and the attack on the cultural institutions of capitalism have been broken by the political-military superiority of the enemy. The revolutionary thrust and the demands of the masses have lacked strategic force: a revolutionary political-military counterpower which could engage, wear down and disarm the political-military power of the enemy. What has been missing is the revolutionary proletarian army, the motor force of every revolutionary process, every revolutionary war, the force that unites the class and leads the revolutionary war. And if there is no revolutionary army, a revolutionary counterpower cannot be created. If the revolutionary army has been lacking this is due to the fact that the essential character of class conflict as class war has been denied."

Osvaldo saw the need for this "leap" as deriving more from the deep contradictions of the capitalist mode of production, than from the specific events mentioned above. It seemed to him, in fact, that to the antagonistic relations of capitalist production that tie the bourgeoisie and the proletariat together, there whould be a corresponding set of antagonisms on all other levels of society.

On the political level therefore, what other power relation can there be other than "a state of war between the classes?"

Besides, he reminds us, this is already a given fact for the bourgeoisie, while the Left "is far from having spelled out this fact for itself."

The first task of theoretical activity is therefore to spell out this objective truth.

From this it is possible, in fact, to draw certain "indispensable conclusions":

A. If class conflict is class war, revolutionary war is governed by the general principles of war;

B. That the strategy and tactics of the enemy are governed by the rules and principles of war, this being true whether it be in moments of acute social tension, of open social conflicts, or in moments of so-called democracy, peace or social truce.

C. That revolutionary war is not limited, and cannot be limited to, one

single encounter, one single battle (general mass insurrection), but is indeed a series of encounters, battles, pauses and truces.

D. That finally it is not possible to fight, much less win, the revolutionary class war without adequate instruments of power, without a revolutionary army.

E. And lastly, when you analyze a given situation from a political-military point of view, it is much easier to recognize the exact outlines of the enemy's strategy and tactics, and make an exact evaluation of the correlation of forces and predict the enemy's actions.

For Osvaldo the above deductions are the starting point for the working out of a "strategy for victory," of the "tactics needed for this victory" and the means necessary for such a strategy and tactics.

Here a strategic intuition very clearly emerges that forcefully breaks with the whole 3rd "Internationalist, rather than Leninist, traditional strategy for the conquest of power in the capitalist countries.

It is a well-known fact that over the last 40 years the Leninist theory of insurrection has been distorted by a mechanistic sclerosis that has finally reduced it to a rigid and abstract model superimposed on the differing realities of various revolutionary movements. Thus it was stripped of Lenin's most basic teaching--that one must always begin with a concrete and historically determined analysis of each situation.

It is not superfluous to add that all the revisionists and opportunists have used this crude 3rd Internationalist schema on the question of insurrection. They brand as "adventurists," "terrorists," "Blanquists," all of the proletarian vanguards that base themselves on the most politically mature advances of the workers, attempting to develop adequate strategies for the new historic conditions of the revolutionary struggle.

Osvaldo, and moreover the BR (Red Brigades-Ed.), in saying that:

"The use of revolutionary violence cannot be limited to the last stage of the mass revolutionary insurrection, but is characteristic of the whole, long process required to bend and break the political-military power of the enemy," focuses in on the new strategic content that begins to be the foundation for the revolutionary practice of the proletariat in the imperialist metropolis.

Politics and war are viewed, after the long, mechanistic night, in dialectical unity, revealing themselves as "two aspects of a single strategy whose objective is to overwhelm and wipe out the enemy."

In fact, it is now possible from the proletarian side to apply the principles of war to every manifestation of the class struggle.

The protracted character of the class war does not exhaust all potential aspects of this concept; which, in fact, for Osvaldo applies not only to the contradiction between proletariat and bourgeoisie, but also between the "imperialist camp" and the "socialist camp."

After 1917, and even more clearly after WWII, we enter, according to him, "the epoch of permanent armies": "counter-revolutionary ones in defense of the privileges of the capitalist bourgeoisie and imperialism, and revolutionary ones, whether they be ones defending the socialist countries, or whether they be armies that arise from the exploited and oppressed proletariat."

Here the lack of understanding of the nature of Revisionism and social-imperialism that we referred to earlier, becomes perfectly clear. The ambiguous concept of "socialist camp" is now applied outright to "the revolutionary armies that defend that camp." Comrade Osvaldo's strategy is inevitably undermined by this lack of understanding.

The two-fold character of the "class war" inexorably emerges from this line of reasoning; it is worthwhile to emphasize the relationship of these two aspects of the class war, since the implications are decisive for the revolutionary strategy of the metropolitan proletariat.

As we said, according to Osvaldo the "class war" assumes two basic and tightly interwoven forms:

"The enemy conducts this class war (which unfolds inside each capitalist country and on the international front) according to a world-wide strategy of intervention which operates on two levels. The enemy, after due consideration, makes a complete identification between the international proletariat and the socialist countries. That the international proletariat, conversely, does not, or can no longer, identify with all the socialist countries is certainly a bad thing."

This conviction led Osvaldo to consider the "socialist camp" as the rear base of the revolutionary armies that were arising in the imperialist metropolis, and to subordinate in practice (whatever their illusions) the strategies of these armies to the worldwide strategy of the "socialist camp."

The fact remains that the mythical "socialist camp" was at that moment sinking its material roots--and had already for many years been sinking its material roots--in a very unsocialist reality: Soviet and East European State Capitalism in its social-imperialist phase.

Strategic framework of this kind, by the way, is certainly possible and even practical. It is a forgotten fact that several revisionist sectors in our country remain more or less secretly tied to this strategy. But this said, it is also certain that we are no longer talking about a communist revolution.

We wish to be very clear on this point: imperialism and social-imperialism are two specific variations of the capitalist mode of production at this point--"classic" capitalism and State Capitalism. Together they form an IMPERIALIST SYSTEM in which there is both unity and contradiction: unity in the capitalist mode of production; contradiction between its geographically and historically determined forms of existence.

To sum up, if the revolutionary forces can and must exploit the inter-

imperialist contradictions between imperialism and social-imperialism, this in no way can translate itself into any form of collusion with one combatant or the other.

The theory of the necessity or possibility of developing the class war in the imperialist metropolis, in accordance with a long term political-military strategy, is one of the most important contributions made by Osvaldo to the development of the armed struggle. This does not however resolve a second important question: the nature of the relationship between the armed party and the revolutionary army in the system of proletarian power.

Let's listen to his words:

"The class war, like all class wars, is fought and is won if we know how to use the objective laws of warfare better than the enemy. And the first, most elementary observation is that war is not won with words or 'politics,' but by counterposing to the politics of war of the enemy, to his political-military power, a politics of proletarian war, the revolutionary political-military counterpower of the proletariat.

"We speak of a proletarian political-military counterpower which is at the same time the party, the revolutionary army, and the first nucleus of the future proletarian state, of the future dictatorship of the proletariat."

Despite the basic homogeneity of this thesis, there were in the period during which it was put forward, different ways of conceiving of the formation of the armed party and the revolutionary army.

The importance of this question should not be overlooked, because it is precisely in the different solutions given to this question that the GAP and the Red Brigades developed differently.

Put very concisely, the terms of the divergence were this. For the Red Brigades the formation of the first armed vanguards must be a process built around the real working class movement of the industrial centers, of the big urban factories: a working class which in those years expressed the highest levels of political consciousness and class autonomy that had matured in the mass struggles of 1968-9. It was precisely those levels of political consciousness, that, in fact, were the basis for the decision of substantial numbers of vanguard elements to develop the offensive under the new conditions determined by the counterattack of the bourgeoisie; and for the decision to adopt new organizational instruments, ones that would make the necessary qualitative leap in the struggle possible.

It must be added that the initiation of armed struggle by the most conscious and mature vanguard elements of the working class represented an essential and ongoing proof, in practice, of the strategic hypotheses that were being developed. In no case could the construction of the armed organization along external lines have allowed for such a verification.

For the GAP instead, as Osvaldo clarifies:

"The first nuclei of this proletarian revolutionary power are born by

the combination of a high degree of class consciousness (that gives rise to individual revolt, the premise for every revolutionary process) with a revolutionary praxis (the constant verification and confirmation of the individual insurrectional reality) and finally from the capacity for a theoretical development of a strategy that certainly cannot foresee every event and future tactical development from the beginning..."

It is not a small difference and not without practical consequences.

While for the Red Brigades the formation and development of the armed vanguard must always occur on lines internal to the real class movement, even if only partially so, for the GAP the process of consolidation can occur along external lines; the result, that is of the subjective maturation of individual militants, not necessarily tied to specific class movements: militants who, on the basis of common political choices, unite in a group which almost immediately constitutes itself as the first unit of the revolutionary army. As they declare:

"The political and physical unity between the revolutionary army and the mass of workers, from whom the army itself is born, cannot be considered a promise, but rather a conquest of revolutionary war, a conquest which is simultaneous with the final defeat of the enemy."

So that while, in the first case there is an internal relation between armed vanguard and masses, in the second an indeterminate external relation takes form, a relation open that is to subjective developments inherent in the dynamic of the group.

From these different formulations emerge different ways of formulating the problem of the formation of the armed party and the red army.

For Osvaldo, the first grouping of comrades is already the first cell of the revolutionary army, which from the beginning is conceived of as the essential instrument of class war--"motor force," "central nucleus of proletarian counterpower."

He thinks that only this way "can the immense forces of the proletariat be recovered, that infinite variety of tactical moments of struggle, of agitation and propaganda that unconnected between themselves and from a revolutionary political-military power lose themselves in a hopeless wearing-down of men, will and energy."

Nevertheless he distinguishes between the multiple expressions of the class movement which are the starting point, and the revolutionary army which must necessarily constitute its centralized political-military nucleus—in fact, the political-military vanguard which knows how to gather and develop its strength based on a precise strategy.

For Osvaldo, thus the ideal of the proletarian organization under the historical conditions characterized by a proletarian antagonism spread out in class war is the Revolutionary Army.

The difference with the Red Brigades who instead, at the same time,

(September 1971) declare themselves "first points of consolidation for the formation of the armed party of the proletariat" is not only terminological.

Even though both these organizational approaches have an equal political-military character, there is no doubt that while one gives the military aspect predominance over the political aspect, the other places emphasis on the dominance of politics over the gun.

With this we are not saying that there is an alternative between the armed party and the Revolutionary Army. Both are certainly constituent elements of the system of proletarian power.

We only meant to say that at the beginning of the '70's the program that was being put forward to the advanced elements of the class was that of "acting as a party to build the metropolitan proletariat, through a careful policy of armed propaganda, those subjective conditions that today allow us to put on the order of the day the qualitative leap forward toward the armed communist party and the red army."

We do not deny that today the specific conditions of the proletarian antagonism constitute an objective basis for the red army; but this was certainly not the case in 1970 and 1971, not in the immediate following years.

It seems to us an undeniable fact that if the antagonistic behavior has progressively spread throughout the various sectors of the metropolitan proletariat this was not accidental but was due to the political-military initiative of those armed vanguards that "acting as a party" in the beginning phase of struggles and crisis, have assumed the historic task of planting the root idea of the possibility and necessity of armed struggle for communism within the body of a proletariat from whom this idea had been progressively expropriated by the systematic initiative of the revisionist forces.

Today we declare that the process of forming the red army is already begun and is developing everywhere: the nuclei, the squads, the cells, the fighting formations, the committees of struggle...that is all the mass political-military organisms that make up the archipelago of the proletarian movement of offensive resistance are its embryo and stand before everyone as proof.

We say that these armed mass organisms, even given their actual lack of homogeneity and their dispersion must be considered the "DIVISIONS IN FORMATION OF THE RED ARMY."

We declare that the Armed Communist Party works within their ranks to build the subjective conditions, organize and lead the transition toward the phase of anti-imperialist civil war.

On March 14, 1972 Comrade Osvaldo is killed in a guerrilla action.

In the climate of those years when there was a diffuse fear of palace intrigues whose protagonists and outlines are still not clear, a climate

made even more tense by the battles and arrests of March 11th, there was unleashed around his death a tumult of voices, gossip and preconceived theories, all united on one point: to deny Osvaldo's political identity and exorcise the existence of guerrilla warfare in our country.

This death, given Osvaldo's reputation, his political prominence, creates many problems. It not only scares the bourgeoisie but also the entire parliamentary and extra-parliamentary Left, which is forced to either reopen the discussion of all the unresolved theoretical problems of a revolutionary strategy for Italy, or to completely reveal the opportunist and collaborationist nature of their revisionist plans.

Osvaldo's death in fact gives explosive birth to a discussion among the masses of the necessity and possibility of a course of armed struggle for communism in the imperialist metropolis.

That which had been until then a debate limited to a restricted circle of political vanguards, now spreads to wide strata of militants, forcing them to take a position on these questions.

It is not surprising that the first immediate reaction was to refuse to measure up to the problem, and the subsequent reliance on the most improbable theories centered around the most incredible conspiracies. It was in fact a defensive response which can be explained by revisionism's ideological and political disarmament of the working class and its proletarian strata.

At a distance of 7 years none of the castles that counter-revolutionary and revisionist fantasies had constructed on the sands of their dreary games remains standing.

At a distance of 7 years the only real conspiracy reveals itself: the diabolical design to bury with Osvaldo's body his political truth, his revolutionary message. Osvaldo was not a victim, but a revolutionary who fell in battle.

He was engaged in an operation to sabotage high-tension electric power lines to create a blackout over a large part of Milan. This was to give better operational cover to guerrilla units engaged in attacking various targets. Beyond that the blackout itself would have increased the impact of these acts of armed propaganda.

It was a technical error he himself committed; that is, the choice of and use of unreliable watches as timers, underestimating the need for safety because it was inconvenient, that caused the fatal accident and the resulting failure of the entire operation.

This operation was intended to be a hard and quick answer of the GAP Brigades to the bourgeoisie, who in recent days had unleashed their coercive apparatus against the revolutionary movement--it is enough to remember the street fighting of March 11th, the police murder of pensioner Tavecchio, and the over 100 arrests.

The death of Comrade Osvaldo coincides with the disappearance from the

political scene of the Partisan Action Groups.

It is coincidental to but not the cause of the GAP's disappearance from the revolutionary front, which after all is the product of errors in their political line and the organizational plan it was based on.

It is good to remember here that in no case can the loss of a comrade, no matter how important, determine the defeat of a correct political strategy. It can be blocked or delayed, but having been evoked by powerful objective causes and specific class contradictions, it will always find a way to develop itself.

Revolutionary ideas, revolutionary leaders and organizations are not the cause of revolutionary processes, but rather their active, dialectical manifestation.

From the beginning the relations between the GAP and the BR were characterized by the greatest correctness; nor was there ever any competitive spirit between the two organizations.

The differences in strategic outlook were clear to both groups, and also therefore the fact that only practice, only the revolutionary struggle would clearly prove one of their respective theories to be correct.

For this reason the question of unity between the two organizations was never raised, nor was there any hint of a vague "inter-column, metropolitan General Staff." Instead every aspect of solidarity and militant collaboration possible at that time was cultivated with maximum effort.

The political defeat of the GAP Brigades certainly did not mean the disappearance of its most conscious and sincerely revolutionary militants.

There are those who continue to struggle in the prisons of the regime and those who continue the struggle with rifle in hand.

But there are also those who under new conditions take the opportunity to flee from the battle. They are those opportunists who until that moment had found a way, in the shadow of Osvaldo, to gratify to one degree or another their consciences (and for some not only to gratify their consciences!). Those opportunists now understand that it is no longer possible to cloak themselves in the ambiguity of choices made and not made, and that Osvaldo's heritage consists of a gun to be picked up.

Their flight favors and accelerates the confrontation with the Red Brigades, which is resolved by the entry into the BR of the most conscious comrades.

Their entry does not obviously negate the courage nor the contribution the GAP Brigades made to the birth of the revolutionary process in Italy, but rather marks the overcoming of those limits that had characterized the their strategy.

HONOR TO COMRADE OSVALDO AND ALL THE COMRADES WHO HAVE FALLEN FIGHTING FOR COMMUNISM!